

1 In the Matters of)
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 3)
 4 Telecommunications Relay)
 5 Services and Speech-to-Speech) CG Docket No. 03-123
 6 (STS) Relay Services for)
 7 Individuals with Hearing and)
 8 Speech Disabilities)
 9)
 10 Speech-to-Speech and Internet)
 11 Protocol (IP) Speech-to-Speech) CG Docket No. 08-15
 12 Telecommunications Relay)

COMMENTS OF

13
 14 **AMICUS, INC. DISABILITY SERVICES, AMICUS, INC. RESEARCH**
 15 **INSTITUTE, LOS ANGELES CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**
 16 **(LACIL), WRAD INC., AND INDIVIDUAL CONSUMERS WITH BOTH**
 17 **HEARING AND SPEECH DISABILITIES DUE TO EARLY-ONSET**
 18 **PROFOUND DEAFNESS (PRIOR TO AGE 6)**

19
 20 The above-mentioned organizations and individuals hereby submit their comments in
 21 response to the Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the above-captioned
 proceeding.

22 **1.) There are two VERY DIFFERENT Relay Services in existence. The**
 23 **Commission is confused between the two different systems, and their**
 assistance service provision.

24 Initially, due to the fact that the community of individuals with Hearing Loss have
 25 been granted human assistants in order to communicate verbally with other human
 26 beings, including the members of the Federal Communications Commission, and since
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those assistance providers² commonly advocate ON THEIR OWN BEHALF as well as on behalf of the persons with hearing loss whom they are "supposed" to serve without conflict of interest, the Commission established the "Relay Services for the deaf and hard of hearing population" first.

Since the VAST MAJORITY of the deaf and hard of hearing population has normal, clear and understandable speech, the vast majority of the services of the "DHH (deaf and hard of hearing) Relay Services" should be focused on RECEPTIVE communication, and on the expansion of VCO (voice carry-over) services as a top priority, particularly since most of the future users will expand this need, since there are many fewer early-deafened individuals than ever before in history, and those who are affected by hearing loss or deafened after age 6 (and most experience hearing loss after reaching full adulthood) DO NOT understand or primarily use "American Sign Language," do not require "interpreters," and can speak clearly and understandably.

The obvious "preference" of the FCC for continuing to fund massive and extraordinarily expensive services for the very few individuals who really need "sign language" for communication is an utter waste of taxpayer funding, as well as causing huge amounts of abuse of the system by "sign language interpreters" and other people who have perfectly normal hearing and speaking ability, but who utilize the current "Culturally Deaf" Relay Services both for making "free telephone calls," and also for communicating WITH EACH OTHER to avoid voice telephone charges, and especially for earning more money for themselves by making these calls and then telling the FCC that there are more "deaf" users than is actually the case. These

¹ See *Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, CG Docket No. 03-123, et al., *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, FCC 08-149 (Rel. June 24, 2008) ("NPRM").

² They call themselves "ASL Interpreters" or "American Sign Language Interpreters," which is a designation of a NON-ENGLISH "cultural" form of communication.

1 Fraudulent activities are well known within the community of persons with hearing
2 loss, and constitute government taxpayer funding waste, which must be prevented
3 much more fully and with much more government oversight.

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5 **2.) The existing services provided for persons with ONLY hearing loss are**
6 **inadequate and must be revised.**

7 Most of the "deaf and hard of hearing" relay services are aggressively advertising
8 a socio-political "Deaf Culture/ASL" agenda on their websites, particularly the i711
9 Relay Service, even though, as stated above, the vast majority of individuals with
10 hearing loss DO NOT understand or utilize "ASL" and have never participated in
11 "Deaf Culture." The numbers of individuals with early-onset bilateral (both ears)
12 profound deafness is dwindling rapidly, and many children of the next and future
13 generations are taking full and proper advantage of the new cochlear implant
14 technologies to obtain a clear and understandable speaking voice, which they can use
15 very well with the VCO Relay Services (see, e.g., <http://www.oraldeafed.org>).
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17 Therefore, the continual funding support of the FCC for outrageously aggressive
18 advertising for the "sign language-based" Relay Services is out of date and represents
19 a lack of transparency and oversight as to how many ACTUAL users of these
20 "signing" Relay Services exist in the general population of the USA. Statistical data
21 must be obtained, through independent and unbiased sources, as those who are
22 receiving the funding from the FCC for these "signing-based" Relay Services will
23 obviously never tell the truth to the FCC in order to preserve their "free government
24 money."
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1 3.) Services provided for persons with SPEECH and/or VOICE disabilities are
2 ENTIRELY different than those provided for individuals with hearing loss.
3 Services provided for persons with Speech and/or Voice disabilities are
4 COMPLETELY different than those provided for persons with hearing loss, since
5 Speech and/or Voice disabilities primarily require assistance with EXPRESSIVE
6 communication.

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8 Persons who are running the "sign language-based" Relay Services are not
9 trained, nor are they skilled, in LISTENING TO, or UNDERSTANDING the vocal
10 output of anyone with a Speech or Voice disability, and are trained only to "look at
11 and interpret (put into their own words)" what a deaf or hard of hearing individual
12 with a "deaf speech" speech disability "might" be trying to say. They are not trained
13 as Professional Revoicers for anyone, and cannot be utilized in such capacity. By
14 using THEIR own thoughts (and "guesses") and THEIR own words, they deprive a
15 person with a Speech and/or Voice disability from expressing their thoughts in their
16 own words, which is a direct violation of both the ADA and the disabled individuals
17 rights to Freedom of SPEECH under the U.S. Constitution.

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19 For these reasons, it is MANDATORY for the FCC to SEPARATE the Speech-
20 to-Speech Relay Services (STS Relay) from the "other" ("hearing loss") Relay
21 Services. STS Relay must be a completely separate division, with completely separate
22 FUNDING, and completely separate administration. This must be done for a very
23 significant reason – according to the National Institutes of Health, THERE ARE 42
24 MILLION persons with Speech and/or Voice disabilities in the United States, and
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1 many others, such as those who were early-deafened and who have a combination
2 speech and hearing dual disability BUT WHO USE THEIR OWN VOICES, THINK
3 IN AND SPEAK IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AND WHO ARE
4 CATEGORIZED AS "AURAL/ORAL DEAF" AND NOT "signing deaf," who
5 belong in this category and who should be accommodated to utilize specialized DHH
6 Revoicers and receive receptive information by TEXT relay linked to the DHH STS
7 Relay section.
8

9 There is a HUGE population of individuals with Speech and/or Voice disabilities
10 who have not been reached properly – more than 42 MILLION of them in the United
11 States, due to the FCC "preference" (which is highly illegal) for the "signing-based"
12 Relay Services.

13 There has not been ANY significant attention paid to Dr. Robert Segalman (who is
14 the known expert on communications for persons with Speech and/or Voice
15 disabilities), most probably because the FCC doesn't want to "bother" trying to
16 communicate with this esteemed individual because he, himself has a speech and voice
17 disability. But that kind of exclusion is utterly prohibited by the Americans With
18 Disabilities Act, the federal Developmental Disabilities Act of 2000, the new
19 Amendments to the Americans With Disabilities Act, and many other laws and
20 regulations, in addition to the "Telecommunications Act."
21

22 STS Relay should not be any kind of "Subsidiary" of the "other relay services for
23 people with hearing loss." STS Relay, and its own subsidiary, DHH STS Relay,
24 should be entirely SEPARATE and SEPARATELY FUNDED, with its own budget
25 granted to the current Speech Communication Assistance by Telephone, Inc. to
26 affirmatively reach and train the more than 42 MILLION people with Speech and/or
27 Voice disabilities to communicate through the telephone system in the USA.
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1 Persons with Speech and/or Voice disabilities were not mentioned specifically in
2 the ADA, but, as of January 1, 2009, with the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, they
3 will finally have FULL and unquestioned legal rights to assert their own needs, speak
4 on their own behalf, and they MUST be contacted, trained, and informed how to
5 properly and effectively speak to others through the telephone system, as many such
6 persons cannot type, and even those who can type often still need Revoicer assistance
7 in order to not be excluded by persons in general society.
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9 Right now, the calls to STS Relay often "go through" other Relay Services, who
10 then "take the credit" for getting the call and report that call to the FCC as "one of
11 theirs," even though their type of Relay Service has NO WAY AT ALL of serving
12 the people who call in, hoping to be assisted by a Professional Revoicer. This situation
13 is obviously preferable to the "signing-based" Relay Services because they get more
14 money. However, it also EXCLUDES, illegally, persons with Speech and/or Voice
15 disabilities from utilizing the telephone system, particularly since those people from the
16 "other" Relay Services often hang up on them (but still take the "credit" for getting
17 the call, and therefore get paid by the FCC for providing no service at all to a disabled
18 individual).
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20 Further, there are great differences between persons with SPEECH disabilities
21 (who have a voice, who produce vocal output, but who have "unclear" speech), and
22 those with VOICE disabilities (who have little or no vocal output).
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- 24 • Persons with SPEECH disabilities unquestionably require a Professional
25 Revoicer, as they have a voice and should be enabled to use their own voice.
26 Service Providers for the "other" Relay Services for persons with ONLY
27 hearing loss are not trained to be Professional Revoicers, and often have
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- difficulties listening to other people auditorily, which is why most of those people focus on “sign language” and not on listening.
- Persons with VOICE disabilities usually utilize computerized or other types of “voice output” or “speech output” equipment, most of which is completely UNKNOWN to the people who run those “other” types of Relay Services. Such persons obviously require EXTRA TIME for communications, as typing can be FAR slower than verbal speech in most conversations.
- Most of the 42 MILLION (plus) people with Speech and Voice disabilities have never learned any kind of “sign language,” have never used any kind of “sign language,” and most do not have any intention of doing so. Because those “other” Relay Services are most obviously focused on “sign language,” there is no way that they can properly serve individuals with Speech and/or Voice disabilities.

CONCLUSION

For these and the many other reasons known to the FCC, and to the Commission, and those which can be easily discovered through discussions with the Cerebral Palsy Association, the A.G. Bell Association, Clarke School for the ORAL Deaf, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and the many groups and equipment manufacturers who assist persons with speech and/or voice disabilities, and, of course, the statistical data and research results provided publicly by the cochlear implant manufacturers in regard to the speech disability of persons who are early-deafened, and... most especially... the research results published by D.K. Shibata (2007), “Differences in BRAIN STRUCTURE in (Early) Deaf Persons on MRI

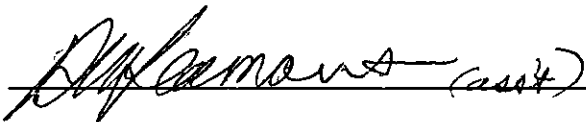
1 Imaging Studied with Voxel-Based Morphometry,” American Journal of
2 Neuroradiology, 2:243-249 (February, 2007), which actually shows PHOTOGRAPHS
3 OF THE BRAIN and the lack of brain development in the SPEECH-SOUND
4 (PHONEMIC) PROCESSING AREA OF THE BRAIN in early-deafened people (i.e.
5 “ASL” isn’t a “human-only natural language,” it is simply a necessary
6 accommodation for individuals who have a significant LACK OF BRAIN
7 DEVELOPMENT in the Speech Center of their brain in childhood that becomes
8 permanent and irremediable at age 6 – even though “hearing” can be restored almost
9 fully thereafter with a cochlear implant).

11 The FCC cannot continue its previous “easy way” of letting the “signing-based”
12 Relay Service providers control ALL types of Relay Services, especially the STS
13 Relay Service. STS Relay is for a group of persons in the general public whose
14 numbers FAR EXCEED the estimated (and probably much smaller than estimated)
15 numbers of “persons with hearing loss” in the USA.

17 Persons with Speech and/or Voice disabilities can no longer be ignored, excluded,
18 isolated, segregated, or “put under” service providers who are focused on a
19 completely different communication disability of “hearing loss.” This is wrong,
20 particularly since there is already a very knowledgeable and very skilled and
21 competent agency, “Speech Communication by Telephone, Inc.” that has been
22 serving persons with Speech and Voice disabilities competently, and which MUST BE
23 SEPARATED and MUST BE SEPARATELY AND FULLY FUNDED, in order to
24 reach and train these individuals who are being almost completely ignored by the
25 “other” Relay Service providers.

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Respectfully submitted on behalf of, and with the agreement of, all submitters listed:

 (asst)

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And 45 Individuals with BOTH hearing and SPEECH disabilities who are early-deafened and who have been trained to speak, but their speech is often "unclear" to others -- and who do not wish to list their names because they have been attacked, defamed, and otherwise harmed, very aggressively, by "ASL/Deaf Culture" advocates who want them to "use ASL sign language" INSTEAD OF USING THEIR OWN VOICE AND THEIR OWN WORDS for communication with persons in general society, and by others who CANNOT EVER BE "Revoicers" for persons with speech disabilities and therefore do not want such persons to request DHH STS Relay services and block such access whenever humanly possible -- thus leaving these people COMPLETELY UNABLE to use the telephone system through using THEIR OWN voice and THEIR OWN speech. As a result of this, these persons must remain anonymous for their own peace and security, which is the reason WHY the FCC never hears from these individuals. This should not be happening, but it is happening, and the FCC should be fully aware of this situation. Such persons commonly now utilize cochlear implant technologies, for which they are FURTHER attacked, defamed and otherwise harmed by the individuals who are "advocating" (including advocating to the FCC) for "signing-based" Relay Services. These individuals, in actuality, are the MAJORITY of persons within the deaf community, and include all individuals who are Late-Deafened Adults (who have normal speaking ability).